Protest by BSNL Officers

†192. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Officers of BSNL had expressed their protest by observing silence at Rajghat in December, 2002;

(b) if so, what are their demands; and

(c) Governments reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Their demands *inter-alia* includes extension of five year limit for deemed deputation, continuous recruitment to 'Indian Telecom Service' cadre through Union Public Service Commission, cadre review of Indian Telecom Service, upgradation of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited Board & financial viability of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited.

(c) The demands of the Officers of the BSNL are under the consideration in consultation with the concerned Departments/Ministries. To ensure the financial viability of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, the Government has agreed to provide certain package of measures *viz.*, moratorium on repayment of principal and interest upto 31.3.04 on Government loans, exemption from payment of dividend on preference share capital upto 31.3.2004. BSNL will also enjoy 50% and 25% waiver on dividend due on equity for the years 2002-03 and 2003-04 respectively. Payment of license fee and spectrum charges by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited will be set off against reimbursements upto 31.3.2003 on loses incurred on account of rural telephony operations or other socially desirable projects.

Telecom Racket

†193. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards the

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

news-item captioned "Telecom racket busted" which was published in the 'Hindustan Times' dated the 8th September, 2002;

(b) whether a number of persons have been found indulged in making STD/ISD calls illegally causing loss of crores of rupees; and

(c) if so, the number of persons arrested alongwith the persons against whom action has been taken during the last year and till date?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) From 1st january, 2001, 82 cases involving private firms/persons have been detected for stealing of telephony bypassing authorized Telecom Network till 15th February 2003 resulting in national loss to service providers. Besides, 32 other cases of misuse of STD/ISD involving 67 persons have also been detected till November 2002. The loss suffered by BSNL/MTNL in 16 of these STD/ISD cases is estimated to around Rs. 1.52 crores and in the remaining cases, the loss could not be assessed.

(c) 59 persons were arrested in this regard since 1st January, 2001 and action has been initiated against them by CBI/Police.

Communication facilities in NER

194. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that if one wishes to call from Agartala to any part of the country has to do an ISD call instead of STD call;

(b) if so, the reasons for such a pitiable communication facilities existing in the North-Eastern Region; and

(c) whether any action has been taken by Government to expand its communication network to all the important cities of the North-Eastern States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) No, Sir.